



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

March 24, 2005

Ms. Angela M. DeLuca
Assistant City Attorney
City of College Station
P. O. Box 9960
College Station, Texas 77842

OR2005-02509

Dear Ms. DeLuca:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 221567.

The City of College Station (the "city") received a request for a list of new electrical utility customers for November and December of 2004. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.133 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.¹

Section 552.133 of the Government Code excepts from required public disclosure information held by a public power utility that is related to a competitive matter. *See* Gov't Code § 552.133(b). "Competitive matter" is defined as a matter that the public power utility governing body in good faith determines by vote to be related to the utility's competitive activity. *Id.* § 552.133(a)(3). The governing body also must determine, in like manner, that the release of the information would give an advantage to competitors or prospective competitors. *Id.* Section 552.133(a)(3) lists thirteen categories of information that may not be deemed to be competitive matters. The attorney general may conclude that

¹We assume that the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

section 552.133 is inapplicable to the information at issue only if, based on the information provided, the attorney general determines that the public power utility governing body has not acted in good faith in determining that the issue, matter, or activity is a competitive matter or that the information requested is not reasonably related to a competitive matter. *Id.* § 552.133(c). Furthermore, section 552.133(b) provides as follows:

Information or records are excepted from [required public disclosure] if the information or records are reasonably related to a competitive matter, as defined in this section. Excepted information or records include the text of any resolution of the public power utility governing body determining which issues, activities, or matters constitute competitive matters. Information or records of a municipally owned utility that are reasonably related to a competitive matter are not subject to disclosure under this chapter, whether or not, under the Utilities Code, the municipally owned utility has adopted customer choice or serves in a multiply certificated service area. This section does not limit the right of a public power utility governing body to withhold from disclosure information deemed to be within the scope of any other exception provided for in this chapter, subject to the provisions of this chapter.

Id. § 552.133(b). You inform us that the city owns and operates its own electric utility and that the city council is the utility's governing body for purposes of section 552.133. You further explain that on December 14, 2000, the city council approved Resolution No. 12-14-2000-13.10, declaring certain information to be competitive for purposes of section 552.133. You have submitted a copy of the resolution in requesting this decision, and you advise that the resolution encompasses the customer information at issue. We note that the submitted information is not clearly among the thirteen categories of information that section 552.133 expressly excludes from the definition of competitive matter. *See id.* § 552.133(a)(3). Furthermore, based on the information provided in connection with this request, we cannot conclude that the city failed to act in good faith in adopting this resolution. *See id.* § 552.133(c). Therefore, based on your representations, the city's resolution, and our review of the information at issue, we conclude that the city may withhold the requested information under section 552.133.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full

benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Tex. Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Cindy Nettles
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CN/krl

Ref: ID# 221567

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Larry Winkler
3501 South Texas Avenue
Bryan, Texas 77802
(w/o enclosures)